

EXHIBIT

17

MARILYN

AMONG FRIENDS



SAM SHAW AND NORMAN ROSTEN

M · A · R · I · L · Y · N
among friends

SAM SHAW AND NORMAN ROSTEN

MAGNA BOOKS

This edition published 1992 by Magna Books,
Magna Road, Wigston, Leicester, LE8 2ZH and
exclusively for Angus & Robertson Bookshops
in Australia, produced by The Promotional
Reprint Company Limited

Photographs copyright © 1972, 1979, 1987, by

Sam Shaw and Ian Woosner

Text copyright © 1987 by Norman Rosten

Design copyright © 1987 by Bloomsbury Publishing Ltd

ISBN 1 85422 3003 (UK)

ISBN 1 85648 094 1 (Australia)

Printed in Hong Kong

9

MARILYN VISITS SHANGRI-LA

Marilyn first visited Brooklyn on a rainy day in 1955 and it was because of the rain that we met. She had heard of this fabled land (as who has not?), it became in her mind a mythical place, and here it was at last, close by. And so was Arthur Miller, whom she had met several years earlier in Hollywood on a writing assignment. That may have been a further lure. At any rate, friend Sam gallantly became her guide for the day. They walked over the great Brooklyn Bridge, that stone and steel-suspended miracle, colossus anchored in tides, still surprising the landscape after a century.

They wandered through the streets shunting off from the bridge when fate intervened, as it often does in Brooklyn. It began to rain. From light to heavy. The phone rang, it was Sam. He said in his lively voice, 'If this is you, old buddy, and you still live in the same place, I need a port in a storm. Can you spare some coffee and shelter? I'm with a model who is drenched. We need a roof and a place to dry out.'

'Well, come over, both of you,' I replied. They did, half an hour later, the rain still heavy outside. From a second story curve in a mid-nineteenth century brownstone walk-up, I looked down as Sam and his model friend wearily mounted the stairs. I had not seen Sam for several years, he seemed agile and hearty and smiling as he came into closer view. Behind him was the model he introduced hurriedly as 'Marion' (or so I thought), both passing me as they entered the open doorway of the apartment. She whispered 'Thank you', holding an ankle-length camel-

hair coat closely around her. (It was given to her by Johnny Hyde.)

The model was young and somewhat dampened by the rain, her light-colored hair straggly and uncombed. Her shoes and stockings were wet. She removed her coat and sat down quietly on the couch, her eyes taking in the furniture, the paintings on the wall, the bookcases. She was easily comfortable, like any stray cat finding a warm lucky pillow.

My wife Hedda enters, greeting Sam and our lady visitor with equal warmth, noting her wet shoes and offering a substitute pair of slippers. The model nods with a girlish smile. Hedda goes into the kitchen to set up coffee while Sam and I reminisce about my brief Hollywood experience years back and his own long labors in the showbiz vineyards. I tell him, 'You've had the opportunity all these years, decades, photographing the most beautiful screen personalities in the world, most of them women. You're lucky.'

Marion – I did not recognise her as anyone else – meanwhile had moved to the bookcase and picked out by chance a slim book. She examined it, leafing through several pages: a small volume of poems, entitled *Songs For Patricia*. She read silently, then turned to me.

'Who's Patricia?'

I reply, 'My daughter.'

'They're lovely poems, I'll have to get this book.'

I tell her, 'Take it with you. Consider it a little gift.'

She clutches the book to her body; her

MARILYN VISITS SHANGRI-LA 89



Sam and Marilyn backstage





manner is shy, modest, and at this moment extremely interested.

'Oh, thank you.'

My wife has brought in hot coffee. She invites the model into the bedroom for a quick change of stockings and slippers. Then, more relaxed, we sit and enjoy the coffee.

Hedda asks her, 'Are you a New Yorker? Sam didn't say.'

'No. I'm from California, staying for a while. I'm studying at the Actor's Studio. I'm sort of an actress.' Her feet are drawn up under her; if she were a cat she'd purr.

'That sounds very exciting. Have you been in any plays?'

'Not really. Not yet. I've done some scenes. But I've done a couple of movies.'

'Any I should know, or have I missed them? What is your movie name?'

'Marilyn Monroe.'

My wife and I stare at her, not embarrassed but surprised. She smiles, then offers a little laugh.

Sam, silent until now, joins her laugh. 'Didn't I tell you? Or did I forget?'

'You introduced her as Marion.'

'Did I?' he responds slyly. 'One of my jokes. It's the Girl, genuine, also incognito. She's a friend of my camera. I hope she'll be your friend.'

Marilyn said later that we accepted her for herself, and she never forgot it.

22

TWILIGHT

The last day, August 4th, 1962, in the thirty-sixth year of her life. The hours counting down, the day moving toward darkness. Is there a summation possible? The Goddess, the Golden Girl, Aphrodite, America's darling (for a while), had come to the end of the line. Her career in shambles, her personal life going nowhere, back in the town of her past glory. One might say she had come home to die.

Her two previous loves, DiMaggio and Miller, were continuing on with their lives. Miller had remarried, his new wife bore him a child, reminder of her own failure. DiMaggio would leave the baseball world for the business world. Marilyn had no place to go; in the middle of a new film, she was fired. Booze and pills had now become part of her existence. She drifted among uncertain friends and old lovers in a kind of twilight zone. Then that fatal day of deep depression when her psychiatrist was not available. Her final Father had somehow betrayed her; her real father turned his back long ago; Clark Gable, the kind substitute of her last completed film, had died. She was beyond the power to be saved. Friends, lovers, teachers, a half-sister somewhere, and my wife and I, too, once a port in a storm, now 3000 miles distant. Our dear friend was alone in a room of an incompletely furnished house, the indifferent city around her, and only the telephone close by, solace of the forgotten.

It was a late Friday afternoon of that year when our phone rang in New York. It was her. My wife and I have tried often to analyze that last call. Death was farthest from our minds.

And her voice instantly reassured us: it was high, bubbly, happy, not at all like one preparing to take her life before the next day dawned or trusting in a temporary oblivion of drugs that tragically misfired into death.

Theories would later take hold on the public imagination, for journalism thrives on gossip, conjecture, amateur sleuthing, and wild surmise. And, above all, on sensationalism. Murder. Poison. CIA. Kennedys. Mafia. Stomach pumping. Body snatching and return. As ingenious and attractive as these hints and the clever pursuit of circumstantial evidence are (we were, after all, in Hollywood), there is no hard evidence of murder. Hints, hearsay, some conflicting or suspiciously overlapping details, but most who were around then, witnesses or recallers, are now dead, senile, bored, and the pursuit of 'justice' in this case is will-o'-the-wisp. Let those who wish to cling to murder for the benefit of sales, whose minds run to violence and the exotic, sum it up that way. Questions may always remain. Suicide, even in the case of one who has attempted it many times before succeeding, is too unsatisfying for the public mind; it throws up a finality whereas most Americans like to tease such events to some protracted form, a continuing TV mini-series or soap opera.

As I see it, Marilyn took an (accidental?) overdose; it fitted her character, given the forces crowding in upon her. She hungered for death; let us give her that victory.

As for our phone conversation — among the few calls she made on that final day — one

TWILIGHT 189



would have to have been prescient or trained in these crises to fully grasp the contradictions. She spoke to both of us, an hour of talk, we passed the phone from one to the other. On the surface it was a happy exchange of news and hopes for the future: she was in great shape (not true); she was planning to begin a film in the fall (fantasy); her house was almost furnished (never to be); she planned to come to see us and then take a gala trip to Washington for the opening of Irving Berlin's new musical, *Mr President*; she was getting film offers from all over the world (doubtful). She spoke excitedly about the new kitchen, the

Mexican tiles, the pots, the pans, the stove. She raced on, breathless, gossipy, a little high. Silence, then she repeated How were we? How was I? And over and over, How was Patricia? How she missed us! We were struck by her intensity, as if for a moment she saw us again really as people and friends. Then a rush of new thoughts: it was time to put the past behind and begin to live, let's all start to live before we get too old; why don't I fly out for a visit and talk about the old days of Brooklyn; or, more urgently, she wondered if Hedda couldn't come out even for a weekend . . . What neither of us, neither my wife nor I,

could catch was the subtext of that call. A message we missed. Something urgent underneath, her feverish moving from subject to subject. Only the next morning, hearing the sad news on the radio, did we realize what the message was. It was one word: Help.

I had prophesied it years earlier in the ending of a poem I had written to her but never showed her:

You're not to be rescued wholly in this world.
It must be so. As many who are saved,
That many drown. I see you clinging
To rooms, to phones, forgotten to be loved.